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## University of Alabama to build new state of the art performing arts center on Bryce Hospital grounds

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The new \$60 million performing arts center to be constructed by the University of Alabama on the Bryce Hospital grounds is planned as a state-of-the-art venue for the Department of Theatre and Dance.

The UA board of trustees approved the scope and preliminary budget for the project on Friday.

The 109,017-square-foot center will connect to the historic main Bryce Hospital building via a new lobby. The project will require the demolition of the north wing of the main hospital building.



*Tuscaloosa News*

An old building, now owned by the University of Alabama, waits for renovation on the Bryce Hospital Campus Monday, Feb. 17, 2014. The university plans to build a new \$60 million performing arts center on the grounds. Michelle Lepianka Carter | The Tuscaloosa News

The center will feature a 350-seat drama theater, a 450-seat dance theater, a 250-seat studio theater and associated support spaces, such as a scenery shop and rehearsal hall, according to the preliminary plan.

The center is part of the UA's campus master plan for the historic hospital grounds, which includes new academic and residential buildings and recreational facilities.

UA purchased the Bryce property from the state in 2010, paying nearly \$77 million for the 168 acres on the northeast side of campus and agreeing to pay another \$10 million for environmental cleanup and historic preservation.

Officials with UA and the Alabama Department of Mental Health said plans for the state to finish turning over the historic grounds to the university by mid to early summer remain on track. David Jackson, chief operating officer for the mental health department, said the state anticipated completing a phased move to the new Bryce Hospital on the W.D. Partlow Developmental Center campus in Tuscaloosa by early June.

Work on the arts center will likely not begin for years, according to Tim leopard, assistant vice president for construction.

Leopard described the arts center as a complex project, which would probably take two-years in the design phase, noting acoustic concerns and other aspects that are not usually factors in other building projects.

The projects on the grounds including historic buildings such as the main hospital and plans for new roads that would connect 5th Avenue and Jack Warner Parkway are also still working their way through a series of approvals from the Alabama Historic Commission and the U.S. Department of Transportation, according to Leopard.

The new roads are being funded in part from a \$16 million grant from the Alabama Transportation Rehabilitation and Improvement Program. UA will have to provide a \$9 million match for the road project.

The board also approved a related project to renovate and expand the admissions building east of the main hospital on Friday. The \$20 million project includes renovation of approximately 50 percent of the 123,153-square-foot building and constructing a 26,286-foot addition.

The building is being proposed as a way to consolidate studios, offices, classrooms and seminar space for the theatre department and provide extra space, according to the proposal. The department's size has more than doubled since 2004, according to the presentation to the board. Student enrollment in the program was 299 in the fall of 2013.

The existing department space in Rowand-Johnson Hall would be vacated and used for instruction in core curriculum courses.

UA would also demolish the dance studio on Bryant Drive near Tutwiler resident hall, according to the board packet. The university is still evaluating uses for the land after the demolition, Leopard said.

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